MAYURA

Vol 9

1988 - 1992

NEWS LETTER

OF

BIRDWATCHER'S SOCIETY OF ANDHRA PRADESH

INSTRUCTIONS TO CONTRIBUTORS

Contributors of scientific articles and miscellaneous notes are requested to assist the editors by observing the following instructions.

1. Papers which have at the same time been offered for publication to other journals or periodicals, or have already been published elsewhere, should not be submitted.

2. Papers /articles pertaining to ornithology in Andhra Pradesh state or to bird species found in Andhra Pradesh state only, will be accepted.

3. The manuscript should be preferably typed (double spacing) on one side of a sheet only, and the sheets properly numbered.

4. All common names of birds, mammals, etc., should be followed by the scientific name the first time they are mentioned in the text. The scientific names should be underlined.

5. Trinomials refering to subspecies should only be used where identification has been authentically established by comparisons of specimens actually collected.

6. Photographs for reproduction must be clear and show good contrast. Prints must be postcard sized and on glossy galzed paper.

7. Text figures, line drawings and maps should be in indian ink.

8. Reference to literature should be placed at the end of the paper, alphabetically arranged under the author's name, with the abridged titles of journals or periodicals underlined and titles of books not underlined. thus:

   Choudhury, B.C. (1984): Habitat Survey Project of BSAP - A prelimmnary report Mayura 5(4): 80-89.

   Ali, S. (1977): The Book of Indian Birds. Bombay.

9. Reference to literature in the text should be made by quoting the author's name and year of publication, thus: (Choudhury 1984).

10. The editors reserve the right, other things being equal, to publish a member's contribution earlier than a non-member's.

EDITORS : MAYURA

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NEWSLETTER OF THE BIRDWATCHER'S SOCIETY OF ANDHRA PRADESH
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BIRDS OF ICRISAT CAMPUS - PART 1.

MARY E. PEACOCK

ICRISAT - International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-arid Tropics, is one of 13 international centers worldwide devoted to improving agricultural systems and food production in less developed countries. The mandate adopted by ICRISAT is to improve the stability, yield and food quality of 5 crops essential to the semi-arid tropics. The crops researched are sorghum, pearl millet, pigeon-pea, chick-pea and ground-nut. Groundnut is an important cash crop whilst the others are largely subsistence food crops. ICRISAT headquarters is at Patancheru, 27 km. north-west of Hyderabad on the Bombay highway. The farm areas were managed from 1972 but the buildings were only occupied from 1979. The campus forms an extensive area of 3,600 acres which is completely fenced in and secure. The flat, open land is used primarily for agricultural research on the mandate crops including farming systems, plant breeding, drought work etc., all forming part of the multi-disciplinary research programs. Areas under different stages of cultivation can always be seen at any one time. According to data received from the meteorological station on site the annual rainfall for the years 1980 to1988 ranged from 558 mm. in 1985 to 1170 mm. in 1981. The highest wind speeds were always recorded in June and the lowest in October and November. Relative humidity values were read at 1400 hours, with the lowest percentages occurring in June and the highest in August and September. Monthly average maximum tempera tures ranged from 27° C - 41° C and minimum values from 13° C - 26° C. There is a committee at ICRISAT to monitor and regulate the use of all pesticides and herbicides used on the campus. I hope to retrieve some details on this subject for the next article.

There is one large lake - ICRISAT Lake - with good marsh areas and a stand of young *Acacia* trees. There are several smaller areas of water including the settling lagoons and Campus lake with their luxuriant growth of reeds and a large marshy area on the northern perimeter with its abundance of *Pomaea aquatica*. All these water-bodies maintain heavy fish populations including Murrell, Catfish, Carp, Telapia and Chaff. The All India Co-ordinated Rice Improvement Program have an area under wet cultivation near Manmool village. There is a plant quarantine area on the south-east side which is surrounded by wooded tracts with tall trees and good undergrowth. There is an orchard of Sapota and Mango trees, large *Ficus* trees and avenues of Ashoks.

The agro-forestry department has planted an area of 1,200 trees on the northern side of ICRISAT lake in two phases. These trees have been carefully selected to discourage birds. They have chosen all thornless varieties, the reason behind this

being that squirrels can readily climb the trees thereby discouraging any birds to nest. This department has promised to furnish details of the species and times of planting which can be included in the next article.

The administration buildings, residential complexes and laboratories all have well established gardens and lawns and machinery and equipment stores are located around the site. Although the area is well protected there is fairly heavy vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The farming systems program has nearly twenty draught bullocks which graze under supervision. Depending on the seasonal rainfall the ICRISAT Lake, by April and May, can be reduced to a stream - and Red Lake north and south usually become totally dry. This is accentuated by the fact that they are used for crop irrigation. Campus Lake and the settling lagoons never dry out as they are fed directly by Manjira water.

The area has interesting animal life. Jackal *Canis aureus*, Jungle Cat *Felis chaus*, Squirrels (Genus: *Funambulus)*, Blacknaped Hare *Lepus nigricollis*, Mongoose (Genus: *Herpestidae*), Cobras (Genus: *Naja*), Russell's Viper *Vipera russelli*, Rat Snake *Ptyas mucosus*, lizards including the Monitor *Varanidae* and turtles are all seen very regularly. The bird checklist for the area had reached 198 species until the end of 1988, and this has been contributed to by many observers quite persistently but erratically over that period. Any bird appearing on the list has been well and truly identified, however there is a pending list, detailed at the end of the checklist, for which we welcome confirmation of sightings. Every year the Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*, is a regular visitor. It is usually seen during the hot weather, in April and May, in the garden areas, staying for long periods in one tree. The male, female and sub-adult male have all been recorded. The first sighting of the male Pied Harrier *Circus melanoleucos*, was indeed a highlight. I found it quite difficult to identify at first being new to Indian birds and due to the fact that it stayed resolutely on the ground for at least 20 minutes. My only field guide at the time was a very old edition of Book of Indian Birds by Salim Ali, and this bird did not feature in it. This beautiful slim harrier along with the female has delighted us almost every winter during December, January and February. The Lesser Adjutant Stork *Leptoptilos javanicus* was seen on ICRISAT Lake in March 1983 and in February 1985. The sheer size of this single bird made identification easy although at the time it was in a mixed colony with Painted Storks *Mycteria leucocephala*, with equally distinctive large yellow bills. In March 1987, a group of 3 Demoiselle Cranes *Anthropoides virgo*, appeared on ICRISAT Lake. They were in the company of White Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopica* and Openbilled Storks *Anastomus oscitans*. Unfortunately these dainty cranes had gone by the next morning. Barheaded Geese *Anser indicus* were spotted in a mixed colony of ducks on the western edge of ICRISAT Lake on only two or three occasions. They have not been recorded from 1986 onwards to my knowledge. The Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* has spent quite some time fishing in the various lakes. It

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was seen on many occasions perched patiently on a water level marker in ICRISAT Lake and taking off to hover over the water, diving spectacularly and usually with success. It was also recorded at mid-day on the wires across Campus Lake, and on another memorable day it gave members of BSAP a striking display by diving, procuring a huge fish in it's talons and retreating with quite some difficulty to find a peaceful tree or perch to consume it's catch. The Osprey never seemed content to find a nearby tree but always flew out of our sight with the struggling fish. A flock of at least 300 Red Munias *Estrilda amandava* kept me well amused early one morning near Campus Lake. They were flitting from reed bed to reed bed and trying to count them was taxing indeed. The only thing I was sure of was that the estimate was very conservative indeed. A high proportion of the birds were males in breeding plumage. The Red Munia is seen quite regularly at ICRISAT but normally in groups of up to 10 birds. The Bluethroat *Erithacus svecicus* is an abundant winter visitor. Every year it becomes easier to find them and their numbers are definitely on the increase. They enjoy particularly one rubbish dump which has a small area of stagnant water at one end and heaps of dry plant debris at the other. It is almost always possible to get a sighting of both the male and the female after just a few moments. I have also seen them near Manmool, by the rice paddies and in the Campus Lake area.

One special feature of the site is the heronry at Manmool Lake north. There are at least 10 palm trees in the water and a further 30 nearby accommodating a well established breeding colony of more than 100 Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea*. Every mature tree holds at least one and often 4 or 5 nests. They are extremely easy to observe and would make a wonderful study project. One interesting thing to note is the extreme variation in the colour of both bills and legs. The bills vary from slaty grey to bright yellow and the legs from dull grey through grey-green to yellowy-green to bright pink! I have not observed orange legs as recorded by Salim Ali. The Grey Herons are known to share their homes with the Black Ibis *Pseudibis papillosa*, Roseringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*, Jungle Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*, House Crow *Corvus splendens* and the Redheaded Merlin *Falco chicquera*. Purple Herons *Ardea purpurea* are another exciting feaure of the area. I have seen 4 at one time in the Acacia trees near the Patancheru Tank perimeter, and a quick scan with the binoculars will often reveal the snake-like head, well camouflaged, among the reeds. One visit alone tallied 10 individual birds - 4 at Patancheru Tank, 3 on ICRISAT Lake, and a further 3 well hidden at the back of Manmool Lake South. A large Ficus tree standing on a small island at the edge of Campus Lake has been seen to accommodate a mixed colony of at least 1,000 roosting egrets at night. Until about 1985 the Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* were roosting alongside the egrets but they seem to have gone elsewhere. Night Herons can often be heard among the tall trees in the quarantine area but daytime sightings are now rare. The Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* found a comfortable nesting site in a large Neem *Azadirachta indica* tree standing alone near a small temple adjacent to the quarantine area. For several years they successfully raised a single

chick and became a familiar sight. It was incredible to watch the parent catch a large snake, wrestle with it for some time before taking it off to some obvious perch and slowly ingest the snake, head first. This procedure would often take upto half an hour to get the entire snakedown. Indian Coursers *Cursorius coromandelicus* make irregular appearances, usually on recently harrowed red soil behind the Manmool village area. They are seldom seen on the black soils. On 3 occasions I have seen Blackthroated Weavers *Ploceus benghalensis* in groups of about 15 birds and other birdwatchers have reported at least 2 other sightings. One small group started to nest near Red Lake South but abandoned after a few days. The following incident must have been a freak sighting and I relate the details with hesitation but conviction. Fortunately I was not alone at the time. On turning the corner between the settling lagoons and Campus Lake we saw what appeared to be a Purple Heron standing on the bund in full view. Three things struck us immediately casting extreme doubt on our original identification. Firstly the sheer size, it was enormous, secondly the black or very dark grey legs and thirdly the similarity in colouring to the Purple Heron. Our only conclusion was that it was a Giant Heron *Ardea goliath* . Two of the scientific staff at ICRISAT have asked me if the Lesser Florican *Sypheotides indica* occurs in this area because they both are sure they have seen it at the southern end of the site. From the descriptions they have seen the female, the latter being on 18th May 1988 just before dusk. The grass in the area was standing about 18" high and both independent descriptions are very similar in detail. The Centre is a very exciting place to watch birds be cause of the varied habitat and, of course, very pleas ant because of the protection it affords to both bird- watchers and birds alike. I trust that should ICRISAT ever leave Patancheru or be relocated, all necessary steps would be taken to ensure that this unique area be always conserved and preserved. Apart from the invaluable efforts made by ICRISAT to help subsistence farmers an even greater contribution has been made to India's wildlife.

BIRDS

LITTLE GREBE *Podiceps ruficollis*
INDIAN SHAG *Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*
LITTLE CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax niger*
DARTER *Anhinga rufa*
GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*
PURPLE HERON *Ardea purpurea*
LARGE EGRET *Ardea alba*
GREEN HERON *Butorides striatus*
POND HERON *Ardeola grayii*
CATTLE EGRET *Bubulcus ibis*
MEDIAN EGRET *Egretta intermedia*
LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

REEF HERON *Egretta gularis*
NIGHT HERON *Nycticorax nycticorax*
CHESTNUT BITTERN *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*
PAINTED STORK *Mycteria leucocephala*
OPENBILL STORK *Anastomus oscitans*
WHITENECKED STORK *Ciconia episcopus*
LESSER ADJUTANT STORK *Leptoptilos javanicus*
WHITE STORK *Ciconia ciconia*
BLACKNECKED STORK *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*
WHITE IBIS *Threskiornis aethiopica*
BLACK IBIS *Pseudibis papillosa*
GLOSSY IBIS *Plegadis falcinellus*
SPOONBILL *Platalea leucorodia*
GREATER FLAMINGO *Phoenicopterus roseus*
BARHEADED GOOSE *Anser indicus*
LESSER WHISTLING TEAL *Dendrocygna javanica*
BRAHMINY DUCK *Tadorna ferruginea*
PINTAIL *Anas acuta*
COMMON TEAL *Anas crecca*
SPOTBILL DUCK *Anas poecilorhynchos*
GADWALL *Anas strepera*
WIGEON *Anas penelope*
GARGANEY *Anas querquedula*
SHOVELLER *Anas clypeata*
COMMON POCHARD *Aythya ferina*
WHITE-EYED POCHARD *Aythya nyroca*
TUFTED POCHARD *Aythya fuligula*
COTTON TEAL *Nettapus coromandelianus*
COMB DUCK *Sarkidiornis melanotos*
BLACKWINGED KITE *Elanus caeruleus*
PARIAH KITE *Milvus migrans*
BRAHMINY KITE *Haliastur indus*
SHIKRA *Accipiter badius*
LONGLEGGED BUZZARD *Buteo rufinus*
WHITE-EYED BUZZARD-EAGLE *Butastur teesa*
TAWNY EAGLE *Aquila rapax*
GREATER SPOTTED EAGLE *Aquila clanga*
LESSER SPOTTED EAGLE *Aquila pomarina*
LONGBILLED VULTURE *Gyps indicus*
WHITEBACKED VULTURE *Gyps bengalensis*
EGYPTIAN VULTURE *Neophron percnopterus*
HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

PALLID HARRIER *Circus macrourus*
MONTAGU'S HARRIER *Circus pygargus*
PIED HARRIER *Circus melanoleucos*
MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*
SHORT-TOED EAGLE *Circaetus gallicus*
OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*
REDHEADED MERLIN *Falco chicquera*
KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*
PAINTED PARTRIDGE *Francolinus pictus*
GREY PARTRIDGE *Francolinus pondicerianus*
BROWN CRAKE *Amaurornis akool*
WHITEBREASTED WATERHEN *Amaurornis phoenicurus*
WATERCOCK *Gallicrex cinerea*
INDIAN MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*
PURPLE MOORHEN *Porphyrio porphyrio*
COOT *Fulica atra*
PHEASANT-TAILED JACANA *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*
BRONZEWINGED JACANA *Metopidius indicus*
REDWATTLED LAPWING *Vanellus indicus*
YELLOW-WATTLED LAPWING *Vanellus malabaricus*
GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*
LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*
KENTISH PLOVER *Charadrius alexandrinus*
CURLEW *Numenius arquatus*
BLACKTAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*
SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*
COMMON REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*
MARSH SANDPIPER *Tringa stagnatilis*
GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*
GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*
WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*
COMMON SANDPIPER *Tringa hypoleucos*
FANTAIL SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*
JACK SNIPE *Gallinago minima*
LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*
TEMMINCK'S STINT *Calidris temminckii*
RUFF *Philomachus pugnax*
PAINTED SNIPE *Rostratula benghalensis*
BLACKWINGED STILT *Himantopus himantopus*
STONE CURLEW *Burhinus oedicnemus*
INDIAN COURSER *Cursorius coromandelicus*
BROWNHEADED GULL *Larus brunnicephalus*

BLACKHEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus*
WHISKERED TERN *Chlidonias hybrida*
BLUE ROCK PIGEON *Columba livia*
RING DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*
RED TURTLE-DOVE *Streptopelia tranquebarica*
SPOTTED DOVE *Streptopelia chinensis*
LITTLE BROWN DOVE *Streptopelia senegalensis*
ROSERINGED PARAKEET *Psittacula krameri*
BLOSSOMHEADED PARAKEET *Psittacula cyanocephala*
PIED CRESTED CUCKOO *Clamator jacobinus*
COMMON HAWK-CUCKOO *Cuculus varius*
KOEL *Eudynamys scolopacea*
SMALL GREENBILLED MALKOHA *Rhopodytes viridirostris*
CROW-PHEASANT *Centropus sinensis*
BARN OWL *Tyto alba*
SPOTTED OWLET *Athene brama*
SHORTEARED OWL *Asio flammeus*
INDIAN NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus asiaticus*
HOUSE SWIFT *Apus affinis*
PALM SWIFT *Cypsiurus parvus*
PIED KINGFISHER *Ceryle rudis*
COMMON BLUE KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*
STORKBILLED KINGFISHER *Pelargopsis capensis*
WHITEBREASTED KINGFISHER *Halcyon smyrnensis*
BLUETAILED BEE-EATER *Merops philippinus*
SMALL GREEN BEE-EATER *Merops orientalis*
INDIAN ROLLER *Coracias benghalensis*
HOOPOE *Upupa epops*
CRIMSONBREASTED BARBET *Megalaima haemacephala*
GOLDENBACKED WOODPECKER *Dinopium benghalense*
REDWINGED BUSH-LARK *Mirafra erythroptera*
ASHYCROWNED FINCH-LARK *Eremopterix grisea*
RUFOUSTAILED FINCH-LARK *Ammomanes phoenicurus*
SHORT-TOED LARK *Calandrella cinerea*
SYKES'S CRESTED LARK *Galerida deva*
SMALL INDIAN SKYLARK *Alauda gulgula*
DUSKY CRAG MARTIN *Hirundo concolor*
COMMON SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*
WIRETAILED SWALLOW *Hirundo smithii*
CLIFF SWALLOW *Hirundo fluvicola*
REDRUMPED SWALLOW *Hirundo daurica*
GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor*

BAYBACKED SHRIKE *Lanius vittatus*
RUFOUSBACKED SHRIKE *Lanius schach erythronotus*
GREYBACKED SHRIKE *Lanius schach caniceps*
BROWN SHRIKE *Lanius cristatus*
GOLDEN ORIOLE *Oriolus oriolus*
BLACKHEADED ORIOLE *Oriolus xanthornus*
BLACK DRONGO *Dicrurus adsimilis*
GREY DRONGO *Dicrurus leucophaeus*
WHITEBELLIED DRONGO *Dicrurus caerulescens*
BRAHMINY MYNA *Sturnus pagodarum*
ROSY PASTOR *Sturnus roseus*
COMMON MYNA *Acridotheres tristis*
TREE-PIE *Dendrocitta vagabunda*
HOUSE CROW *Corvus splendens*
JUNGLE CROW *Corvus macrorhynchos*
COMMON WOOD SHRIKE *Tephrodornis pondicerianus*
IORA *Aegithina tiphia*
REDVENTED BULBUL *Pycnonotus cafer*
COMMON BABBLER *Turdoides caudatus*
LARGE GREY BABBLER *Turdoides malcolmi*
JUNGLE BABBLER *Turdoides striatus*
WHITEHEADED BABBLER *Turdoides affinis*
REDBREASTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa parva*
PARADISE FLYCATCHER *Terpsiphone paradisi*
STREAKED FANTAIL WARBLER *Cisticola juncidis*
RUFOUSFRONTED WREN-WARBLER *Prinia buchanani*
INDIAN WREN-WARBLER *Prinia subflava*
ASHY WREN-WARBLER *Prinia socialis*
TAILOR BIRD *Orthotomus sutorius*
GREAT REED-WARBLER *Acrocephalus stentoreus*
BLYTH'S REED-WARBLER *Acrocephalus dumetorum*
PADDYFIELD WARBLER *Acrocephalus agricola*
BOOTED TREE WARBLER *Hippolais caligata*
LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*
BLUETHROAT *Erithacus svecicus*
MAGPIE-ROBIN *Copsychus saularis*
BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros*
STONE CHAT *Saxicola torquata*
PIED BUSH-CHAT *Saxicola caprata*
INDIAN ROBIN *Saxicoloides fulicata*
RICHARD'S PIPIT *Anthus novaeseelandiae richardi*
PADDYFIELD PIPIT *Anthus novaeseelandiae rufulus*

TAWNY PIPIT *Anthus campestris*
GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*
WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*
LARGE PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla maderaspatensis*
TICKELL'S FLOWERPECKER *Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*
PURPLERUMPED SUNBIRD *Nectarinia zeylonica*
PURPLE SUNBIRD *Nectarinia asiatica*
WHITE-EYE *Zosterops palpebrosa*
HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*
BAYA *Ploceus philippinus*
BLACKTHROATED WEAVER *Ploceus benghalensis*
STREAKED WEAVER *Ploceus manyar*
RED MUNIA *Estrilda amandava*
WHITETHROATED MUNIA *Lonchura malabarica*
WHITEBACKED MUNIA *Lonchura striata*
SPOTTED MUNIA *Lonchura punctulata*
BLACKHEADED MUNIA *Lonchura malacca*

FOOTNOTE:-
The following birds have been recorded at ICRISAT but we would like further confirmation before they join the permanent list
GIANT HERON *Ardea goliath*
HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*
LESSER FLORICAN *Sypheotides indica*
INDIAN PITTA *Pitta brachyura*
WHITESPOTTED FANTAIL FLYCATCHER *Rhipidura albicollis*
OLIVACEOUS LEAF-WARBLER *Phylloscopus griseolus*
TICKELL'S BLUE FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa tickelliae*
HODGSON'S BUSH-CHAT *Saxicola insignis*
DARK GREY BUSH-CHAT *Saxicola ferrea*

Birds added to the list between 1988 and March 1991.

PEREGRINE FALCON	*Falco subbuteo*	JUNGLE WREN-WARBLER	*Prinia sylvatica*
COMMON PEAFOWL	*Pavo cristatus*	THICKBILLED WARBLER	*Acrocephalus aedon*
DEMOISELLE CRANE	*Anthropoides virgo*	TREE PIPIT	*Anthus trivialis*
BAILLON'S CRAKE	*Porzana pusilla*	GREYHEADED YELLOW WAGTAIL	*Motacilla flava thunbergi*
INDIAN RIVER TERN	*Sterna aurantia*	BLUEHEADED YELLOW WAGTAIL	*M. F. beema*
GREEN PIGEON	*Treron phoenicoptera*	BLACKHEADED YELLOW WAGTAIL	*M. F. melanogrisea*
GRASS OWL	*Tyto capensis*	YELLOWHEADED WAGTAIL	*M. citreola*
CRESTED LARK	*Galerida cristata*	TICKELL'S FLOWERPECKER	*Dicaeum macrorynchos*
COLLARED SAND MARTIN	*Riparia riparia*	BLACKHEADED BUNTING	*Emberiza melanocephala*
ASHY SWALLOW-SHRIKE	*Artamus fuscus*	REDHEADED BUNTING	*E. bruniceps*

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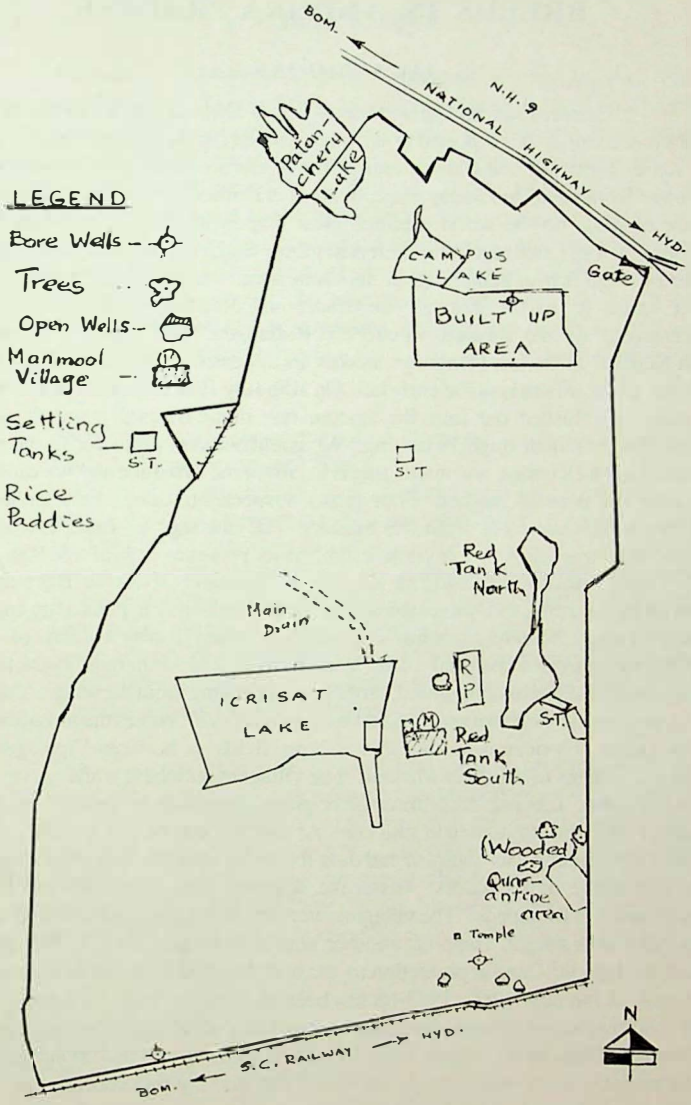
(Editor's Note: Mrs. Peacock does not stay in India any longer)

ICRISAT CAMPUS - PATANCHERU (Medak Dist)



Note: All areas shown unmarked are fields under cultivation or service roads.

LESSER FLORICAN *SYPHEOTIDES INDICA* BREEDS IN ANDHRA PRADESH

K. JAGANMOHAN RAO

Lesser Florican *Sypheotides indica* (J F Miller), is one of the 22 Bustard species in the world. It is reported to have become rare in the country. It was believed that these birds migrate from Central India during south-west monsoons for breeding. Rollapadu and Banaganapally areas in Kurnool district have already found a place of pride on the world ornithological map, with the Great Indian Bustards *Ardeotis nigriceps*, fast regaining their past glory. Suddenly another hidden fact, that Lesser Florican is also inhabiting in the same area, was unraveled in the year 1986. Credit must go to Mr. Jampa, the traditional Nilishikari birdwatcher, who has been engaged as the 'Bustard-watcher' at Rollapadu. The Lesser Florican, called "Nela Nemali" in the local language makes its appearance after a good spell of rains when the grass growth is sufficiently tall. On 10th July 1986and on 8th October 1986, a female was flushed out from Bayalpadu, one of the Bustard plots. It generated interest that the female might be nesting. We could not venture to verify the veracity, as something welcoming and interesting is heard for the first time and we did not want to disturb the hopeful mother. Foot prints suspected to be of a florican were also seen but a real marvelous sight was eluding. All the staff was asked to watch out because the department was eager to establish its presence. Again on 10th October 1987, a male florican presented its display in the early hours in Bayalpadu, the favoured bustard plot, well protected with a cattle-proof trench, planted up with a gave suckers all along boundary around. The cock's breeding display consists of jumping or springing up from a favoured place at intervals of 2 to 5 minutes. These jumps are accompanied with a croaking sound, probably originating from the wings. The display was mostly seen in the dawn and dusk. At last, on6.12.1987, comes the sensational news that a Lesser Florican is nesting in dry crop fields in between Vipinagandla and Bairapura villages of Midthur Mandal. The villagers noticed it while harvesting the groundnut crop. It consisted of three olive green eggs slightly mottled with brown streaks of the size of domestic chicken. As the nest was on the ground and found accidentally, one egg was trampled and thus the entire nest was disturbed. Subsequent protection to the nest fruitless. Hence the deserted eggs were collected to be kept in the museum at Rollapadu. The villagers were informed about the new bird and their cooperation was sought. Happily, another nest was located on 2.1.1988 in bustard plots at Rollapadu. Careful protection to the nest resulted in chicks being born by the 2nd week of January 1988. 1987-88 has been an eventful year for Lesser Florican in our state as some more nests were located in and around Rollapadu and Banaganapally by February 1988, in all, 7 nests were located; 6 nests were hatched succesfully; 11 chicks were born, but 8 only could survive. Thus the breeding success was 85 %.

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THE BIRDS OF MANJIRA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

V. VIJAYA KUMAR

Situated to the North-West of Hyderabad is the Manjira Wildlife Sanctuary. The Manjira river starts from the state of Karnataka and confluences in Godavari river system in Andhra Pradesh. The Manjira river system in A.P. state has four dams, three in Medak district (Ghanpur, Singoor and Manjira) and one in Nizamabad disturict (Nizamsagar). The Watershed (28 sq. kms.) present between Singoor and Manjira Barrage was declared as a crocodile sanctuary in June 1978. This area is a self-contained mini-ecosystem and has a number of small islands. The water level ranges between 46' - 53'. The sanctuary plays an important role in the migratory habits of many bird species. During the migratory season there are usually 30,000 birds of different species present in the sanctuary. Although the number of the species present during this period remains roughly the same, the numbers present within the species fluctuate.

1. There was a large concentration of Common *Anas crecca* and Cotton Teals *Nettapus coromandelianus* .
2. Good number of Brahminy Ducks *Tadorna ferruginea*, more than 1,000 in numbers. This species is rare in South India (Ali, S & Ripley, S D 1981).
3. Six Flamingos *Phoenicopterus roseus* were recorded at this sanctuary during 1986-87 migratory season. (Sangareddy-Manjira is reported to be the location from where flamingos ringed at Lake Rezaiyeh, Azerbaijan, Iran, during the period 1971-74 have been recorded).
4. Large number of Coots *Fulica atra*, Spotbills *Anaspoecilorhyncha* and small flocks of Barheaded Geese *Anser indicus* and Pochards are also common during the migratory season.

This sanctuary is visited by many birds during the migratory season many of whom roosted in the sanctuary during night and were seen in our night crocodile survey periods. The *Ipomia cornia* grown at the island areas forms the preferred roosting area for thousands of egrets. Fifty-one species of wetland birds at Manjira have been already recorded by members of the BSAP during their annual field trips to the sanctuary (Choudhury & Pittie, 1982; Mathew, 1984). During my field study upto now, a total of 73 species of wetland birds were identified and recorded and are listed below.

LITTLE GREBE *Podiceps ruficollis*
LARGE CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*
LITTLE CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax niger*

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*
PURPLE HERON *Ardea purpurea*
LARGE EGRET *Ardea alba*
POND HERON *Ardeola grayii*
CATTLE EGRET *Bubulcus ibis*
MEDIAN EGRET *Egretta intermedia*
LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*
NIGHT HERON *Nycticorax nycticorax*
PAINTED STORK *Mycteria leucocephala*
OPENBILL STORK *Anastomus oscitans*
WHITENECKED STORK *Ciconia episcopus*
WHITE IBIS *Threskiornis aethiopica*
BLACK IBIS *Pseudibis papillosa*
GLOSSY IBIS *Plegadis falcinellus*
SPOONBILL *Platalea leucorodia*
BARHEADED GOOSE *Anser indicus*
LESSER WHISTLING TEAL *Dendrocygna javanica*
BRAHMINY DUCK *Tadorna ferruginea*
PINTAIL *Anas acuta*
COMMON TEAL *Anas crecca*
SPOTBILL DUCK *Anas poecilorhyncha*
WIGEON *Anas penelope*
GARGANEY *Anas querquedula*
SHOVELLER *Anas clypeata*
REDCRESTED POCHARD *Netta rufina*
COMMON POCHARD *Aythya ferina*
TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*
COTTON TEAL *Nettapus coromandelianus*
BLACKWINGED KITE *Elanus caeruleus*
PARIAH KITE *Milvus migrans*
BRAHMINY KITE *Haliastur indus*
SHIKRA *Accipiter badius*
LONGLEGGED BUZZARD *Buteo rufinus*
LONGBILLED VULTURE *Gyps indicus*
WHITEBACKED VULTURE *Gyps bengalensis*
EGYPTIAN VULTURE *Neophron percnopterus*
PALE HARRIER *Circus macrourus*
MONTAGU'S HARRIER *Circus pygargus*
PIED HARRIER *Circus melanoleucos*
MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*
SHORT-TOED EAGLE *Circaetus gallicus*

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*
KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*
DEMOISELLE CRANE *Anthropoides virgo*
WHITEBREASTED WATERHEN *Amaurornis phoenicurus*
INDIAN MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*
PURPLE MOORHEN *Porphyrio porphyrio*
COOT *Fulica atra*
PHEASANT-TAILED JACANA *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*
BRONZEWINGED JACANA *Metopidius indicus*
REDWATTLED LAPWING *Vanellus indicus*
YELLOW-WATTLED LAPWING *Vanellus malabaricus*
LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*
KENTISH PLOVER *Charadrius alexandrinus*
BLACKTAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*
REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*
MARSH SANDPIPER *Tringa stagnatilis*
GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*
GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*
SPOTTED SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*
COMMON SANDPIPER *Tringa hypoleucos*
FANTAIL SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*
JACK SNIPE *Gallinago minima*
LITTLE STINT *Calidris minutus*
RUFF *Philomachus pugnax*
PAINTED SNIPE *Rostratula benghalensis*
BLACKWINGED STILT *Himantopus himantopus*
GREAT STONE PLOVER *Esacus magnirostris*
WHISKERED TERN *Chlidonias hybrida*
RIVER TERN *Sterna aurantia*
BLUE ROCK PIGEON *Columba livia*
RING DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*
SPOTTED DOVE *Streptopelia chinensis*
LITTLE BROWN DOVE *Streptopelia senegalensis*
ROSERINGED PARAKEET *Psittacula krameri*
COUCAL *Centropus sinensis*
GREAT HORNED OWL *Bubo bubo*
SPOTTED OWLET *Athene brama*
HOUSE SWIFT *Apus affinis*
PIED KINGFISHER *Ceryle rudis*
SMALL BLUE KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*
WHITEBREASTED KINGFISHER *Halcyon smyrnensis*

BLUETAILED BEE EATER *Merops philippinus*
SMALL GREEN BEE EATER *Merops orientalis*
ROLLER *Coracias benghalensis*
HOOPOE *Upupa epops*
GREY HORNBILL *Tockus birostris*
GOLDENBACKED WOODPECKER *Dinopium benghalense*
SINGING BUSH-LARK *Mirafra javanica*
ASHYCROWNED FINCH-LARK *Eremopterix grisea*
RUFOUSTAILED FINCH-LARK *Ammomanes phoenicurus*
SYKES'S CRESTED LARK *Galerida deva*
SMALL SKYLARK *Alauda gulgula*
DUSKY CRAG MARTIN *Hirundo concolor*
COMMON SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*
WIRETAILED SWALLOW *Hirundo smithii*
CLIFF SWALLOW *Hirundo fluvicola*
REDRUMPED SWALLOW *Hirundo daurica*
GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor*
BAYBACKED SHRIKE *Lanius vittatus*
RUFOUSBACKED SHRIKE *Lanius schach*
BROWN SHRIKE *Lanius cristatus*
GOLDEN ORIOLE *Oriolus oriolus*
BLACK DRONGO *Dicrurus adsimilis*
BRAHMINY MYNA *Sturnus pagodarum*
ROSY PASTOR *Sturnus roseus*
COMMON MYNA *Acridotheres tristis*
TREE-PIE *Dendrocitta vagabunda*
HOUSE CROW *Corvus splendens*
JUNGLE CROW *Corvus macrorhynchos*
SMALL MINIVET *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*
REDVENTED BULBUL *Pycnonotus cafer*
LARGE GREY BABBLER *Turdoides malcolmi*
REDBREASTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa parva*
ASHY WREN-WARBLER *Prinia socialis*
GREAT REED-WARBLER *Acrocephalus stentoreus*
BLYTH'S REED-WARBLER *Acrocephalus dumetorum*
LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*
MAGPIE-ROBIN *Copsychus saularis*
BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros*
STONE-CHAT *Saxicola torquata*
PIED BUSH-CHAT *Saxicola caprata*
INDIAN ROBIN *Saxicoloides fulicata*

PADDYFIELD PIPIT *Anthus novaeseelandiae*
YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*
YELLOWHEADED WAGTAIL *Motacilla citreola*
GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*
WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*
LARGE PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla maderaspatensis*
PURPLERUMPED SUNBIRD *Nectarinia zeylonica*
PURPLE SUNBIRD *Nectarinia asiatica*
HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*
BAYA *Ploceus philippinus*
STREAKED WEAVER BIRD *Ploceus manyar*
RED MUNIA *Estrilda amandava*
WHITETHROATED MUNIA *Lonchura malabarica*
BLACKHEADED MUNIA *Lonchura malacca*

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FEEDING HABITS OF MARSH HARRIER *CIRCUS AERUGINOSUS*

T. GANESH & P. KANNIAH

Quartering leisurely over marshes and grassland, the Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* seems to be a rather innocuous species. However, its feeding behaviour shows that this is not really the case. The bird is both versatile and intelligent in obtaining its food. Given below are some interesting observations on this bird compiled from our notes. Below normal rainfall during 1986 and 1987 resulted in Fox Sagar (an irrigation tank c. 30 km. of Hyderabad), turning to a shallow water lake, with mudflats and isolated pools of water. This attracted a large number of waders, especially during spring migration (March-May). Such assemblage of birds also attracted predators like Marsh Harrier, Redheaded Merlin *Falco chicquera* and Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*. While the latter two were seen making a kill whenever they were sighted, we saw the Marsh Harrier eating fairly large prey twice. E-30th-female/juvenile was seen making two kills. We could collect the remains of the second kill. This was probably a Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*. Only the feathers, skull and bill remained, no trace of the legs could be seen. Even the bill and skull might have been eaten if we had not come upon the bird. E-2nd-noticed, holding a watersnake under its talons close to the water's edge. We went to see the snake, which the harrier, on seeing us, left and flew away. There was no trace of it being eaten, but a few scars (probably from the talons of the bird) could be seen in the middle. The head was intact which only left us to wonder how it died. We left the snake as it was and walked away. Soon the harrier came and started tearing at the carcass. Among the food items included for Marsh Harrier, snake does not figure as one of its preyA (Ali, S & Ripley, S D 1983). It was getting fairly dark now, when we saw something surprising! The bird was dragging something into the water. Having done so, it left. We rushed in to see - but found no trace of the snake anywhere nearby. It was too large to have been eaten completely. In fact, what the harrier did was to drag it into the water. Was this done to hide it from other animals? We never found out. At Shamirpet also, there was a pair of Marsh Harriers (male and female/juvenile) in February 1987. On the evening of 1st February we saw them feeding right in the water. On closer examination, we saw a duck trapped in a noose, laid out by local trappers. The duck (? Pintail *Anas acuta*) was half eaten and both harriers were seen feeding on it, but not with much relish, probably because it was in 15-20 cm. of water and the birds were unable to drag to the shore. The duck would have died by strangulation once it got caught, hence the harriers were feeding on the carcass which could be at least 12-15 hrs, old and had started to stink. At other more drier areas we have seen the Marsh Harrier surprising a Grey Partridge *Francolinus pondicerianus* and flying after a Blacknaped Hare *Lepusnigricollis*. At the grassland (locally known as "kancha"), its diet includes grasshoppers/locusts,which are abundant at times.

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Received for publication: 15-12-1989.

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" A permanent field station will be established at Tirupati (Chittoor dist.). Necessary approvals from the Andhra Pradesh State Forest Department and the Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanam authorities have been obtained. " Field work for the next 4 months will consist of exploratory ringing and surveys in and around Tirupati hills complex as well as the Eastern Ghats of the adjoining areas. " A pilot bird ringing camp will also be established at ISRO complex at Sriharikota. The authorities have invited B.N.H.S. to carryout bird ringing and surveys in the island and have offered all facilities. The forest in the area is an excellent example of Tropical Dry Evergreen Type and it lies in the migratory route on the eastern sea board. This will provide an excellent monitoring station for southward migration of birds on the eastern sea board."A Bird Migration Project - Annual Report 1987-1988, Bombay Natural History Society.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

BREEDING SEASONS OF SOME WETLAND BIRDS OF MANJIRA

While working on the crocodile project here, I could also ascertain the breeding period of some wetland birds of Manjira Wildlife Sanctuary. A short note is given below.

LITTLE CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax niger*:	Jul. to Nov.
GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*:	Feb. to Apr. Immature seen.
POND HERON *Ardeola grayii*:	Jul. to Oct.
CATTLE EGRET *Bubulcus ibis*:	Apr. to Jul.
LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*:	Jul. to Oct.
PAINTED STORK *Mycteria leucocephala*:	Nov. to Dec.
OPENBILLED STORK *Anastomus oscitans*:	Jan. to Feb. Immature seen.
BRAHMINY KITE *Haliastur indus*:	Jan. to Apr.
PURPLE MOORHEN *Porphyrio porphyrio*:	May to Jul.
COOT *Fulica atra*:	Mar. to May.
REDWATTLED LAPWING *Vanellus indicus*:	May to Jul.
STONE CURLEW *Burhinus oedicnemus*:	Jan. to Mar.
PIED KINGFISHER *Ceryle rudis*:	Jan. to Feb. Immature seen.
WHITEBREASTED KINGFISHER *Halcyon smyrnensis*:	Jun. to Oct.
LARGE PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla maderaspatensis*:	Apr. to Jun.
STREAKED WEAVER BIRD *Ploceus manyar*:	Feb., May to Jul.

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SOME INTERESTING SIGHTINGS AT NARSAPUR FOREST

I visited Narsapur forest between the 19th and 21st of April, 1988. On arrival, I noticed that nearly the whole area had been subjected to a forest fire some days back. The forest was devoid of any undergrowth or grass and all the trees were bare. However, some trees were beginning to sprout new leaves and various trees were also flowering. These were. Flame of the Forest *Butea frondosa*, Silk Cotton *Salmalia malabarica*, Yellow Silk Cotton *Cochlospermum gossypium*, Mohwa *Madhuca indica* and *Erythrina suberosa*. About 2 km. inside the forest, a small part of the forest adjoining a seasonal lake had not bee affected by the fire. There were several wild fig (*Ficus* sp.)

and *Terminalia* trees. There were many birds of various species in this small patch obviously attracted by the nectar, fruit and cover provided by the afore-mentioned trees, all of which were lacking in the adjoining forest. Possibly, this was the reason for the occurrence of some quite unusual species of birds like the Blackheaded Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus*. Other interesting sightings were Pygmy Woodpecker *Picoidesnanus*, Common Wood Shrike *Tephrodornis pondicerianus*, Large Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina novaehollandiae*, Black-headed Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina melanoptera*, Jerdon's Chloropsis *Chloropsis cochinchinensis*, Rufousbellied Babbler *Dumetia hyperythra*, Whitespotted Fantail Fly catcher *Rhipidura albicollis*, Grey Tit *Parus major* and Yellowthroated Sparrow *Petronia xanthocollis*.

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IRIS COLOUR IN BREEDING MEDIAN EGRETS *EGRETTA INTERMEDIA*

While birding recently (13-15 August 1988), in the Narsapur Reserve Forest of Medak District (c. 60 km. north of Hyderabad), we chanced upon a heronry in Narsapur town. There were 3 Tamarind trees *Tamarindus indica* on which Large Egrets *Ardea alba*, Median Egrets *Egretta intermedia* and Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* were nesting. The trees stood in the middle of the town. One of them even had a busy tea stall right beneath it! The birds were least affected by the human activity going on and continued their show of plumed finery with unabashed pride! Knowing that the colour of these birds' bare parts changes radically during courtship and breeding - we were paying particular attention to bills, legs, ceres, orbital skin, irises, etc. One fact was outstanding. Each of the 3 pairs of median egrets nesting on one of the trees had one bird with a red iris and the other with a lemon-yellow iris! None of the books referred to, make a mention of this fact. Could this be a distinguishing mark between male and female median egrets during breeding/courtship periods?

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A KESTREL *FALCO TINNUNCULUS* HUNTS

It was 5 p.m. on 26th September 1985. We were on our regular birding trip to a vast grassland habitat nearJeedimitla. Standing on elevated ground we were taking in the nice view of tall yellowing grass swaying in the breeze when suddenly high up in the air, we caught sight of a Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* pursuing a tiny bird. Immediately we peered through our binoculars and saw the little bird - probably a Streaked Fantail Warbler *Cisticola juncidis*, which were abundant here then - desperately trying to keep the kestrel at bay by many means; some of these were like, suddenly banking sideways; plunging downward only to flatten out and rise again; make sudden U turns and other such aerobatic maneuvres. The kestrel on the other hand was flying steadily with slow and powerful wing beats, keeping a constant distance behind its prey no matter how the little bird tried to distract its attention from itself. This intense struggle for survival between the birds seemed endless when the little bird gave up and dived at tremendous speed to disappear under the tall grass. The kestrel also did the same, but it was a little slow and so lost its dinner. This entire drama lasted just about 2 minutes, but was immensely more exciting than any movie in a theatre. It was a grand show of predator-prey interaction in the arena of Nature and we were thrilled to be witness to it.

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MIGRATION OF DEMOISELLE CRANES *ANTHROPOIDES VIRGO*

Demoiselle Cranes *Anthropoides virgo* are one of the most beautiful cranes and smallest of the family. They are common winter visitors and roost along the river banks at Singoor Barrage (upstream), on the Manjira River. They are omnivores and fly upto 20 km. in search of food.

YEAR	ARRIVAL	DEPARTURE	MAXIMUM Nos.
1986-1987	22-1-1987	9-3-1987	8,000 +
1987-1988	8-2-1987	19-2-1988	6,000 +

The decline in numbers in 1987-88 may be mainly due to habitat loss by storage of water at Singoor Dam and disturbance by the local villagers. Because of the habitat

loss, the birds roosted near villages. Roosting birds produce high pitched calls, which disturb the local villagers.

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A NOTE ON REDWATTLED *VANELLUS INDICUS* AND YELLOW-WATTLED *VANELLUS MALABARICUS* LAPWINGS

During my observations of the crocodiles at Manjira Wildlife Sanctuary, I used to walk along the river banks and island areas in search of the pugmarks and fecal droppings of crocodiles. On such trips my attention was turned by high pitched calls of the lapwings.

This peculiar call made me give some attention towards these birds. The Redwattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus* is the commoner bird in Manjira Sanctuary.

The ratio of sightings of Redwattled and Yellow-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus malabaricus* is 19.75 : 1 [(869):(44)] during the year 1987. This is mainly due to the habitat preference of these two birds. The Yellow-wattled depends less on water and fits perfectly into the dry ecosystem and the Redwattled inhabits river beds and farm-lands. The river banks from Manjira to Singoor were completely occupied by cultivated lands. But for my Singoor upstream visits during February 1987 near Paladugu area the ratio of Redwattled to Yellow-wattled is 2.5:1 (79):(31). This area is completely rocky and dry open river banks. No observations of courtship and mating were made, though three nests of Redwattled lapwings were located on the open ground during May 1987. In 1988 one Redwattled's nest was located during middle March. There are 4 eggs in a nest and the nest and the eggs are about 3.0 cm. x 2.5 cm., olive stone-coloured, irregularly blotched with dark and light brown. All nests were located 15-20 m. from water along the dry river bank or in the dry centre of the islands (island - 75%, river bank - 25%). Though lapwings nest in the open, their chief methods of survival are camouflage and alertness. It is very difficult to locate the bird and its nest during the incubation period. On my first trip (May 1987) without realising I stepped very close to a nest (within 2 m.). The incubating bird flew a short distance and keeping an eye on the nest and calling continuously, walking here and there very close to the nest. When I left the area, within 5 minutes it came back to its nest and sat on its eggs to continue incubation. Redwattled lapwings are seen throughout the year but the Yellow-wattled were absent from the onset monsoon to about December. This indicates a local migration pattern for this bird.

REFERENCE

Ali, S (1977): The Book of Indian Birds. Bombay Natural History Society. Bombay.

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FLOCK SIZE OF ROSERINGED PARAKEET *PSITTACULA KRAMERI*

Roseringed Parakeets *Psittacula krameri* are known to be found in very large noisy flocks near cultivations or in lightly wooded country. In the Book of Indian Birds, Salim Ali writes of them thus; "often bands itself into large flocks and is highly destructive at all times to crops and orchard fruits, gnawing and wasting far more than it actually eats." But how large is the flock size? On 14th November 1986, while on a field trip along the Godavari River in Siwaram Sanctuary of Andhra Pradesh near Manthani, Karimnagar District, I had an opportunity to count some large flocks of Roseringed Parakeets. Around 1730 hours, waiting for the sun to set (so that we go for a night-census of crocodiles in the river), we heard a whizzing noise over our heads. On looking up we saw a flock of Roseringed Parakeets, 250-300 strong, flying from East to West. Two minutes later another flock flew past with same speed and noise in the same direction. The height at which they were flying could not have been more than 80-100 feet and we could hear the wing-flaps as also could feel the air current created by them. Between 1730 and 1745 hours a total of 8 such flocks flew past and our estimated count of them was around 3,000 birds. Since in November the cultivated paddy fields are about to be harvested or being harvested all around, we suspected the movement of these flocks into the paddy fields. They were actually flying from the deciduous forests of the northern bank of Godavari river (Khannapur village) towards the Manthani village.

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NOCTURNAL FEEDING BEHAVIOUR OF PIED KINGFISHER *CERYLE RUDIS*

At intervals of some months, we go for a night-spotting of free-living animals of the Nehru Zoological Park. Of particular interest is the count of Spotted Deer *Axis axis* in the disturbance free open meadows of the zoo at night. It is also interesting to look for Night Herons *Nycticorax nycticorax* and Spotted Owlets *Athenebrama*. I also scan several water bodies and wet moats of the zoo to catch the reflecting eye-glow of any escaped crocodile. On one such night-spotting exercise, during the first week of September 1987, I was quite surprised to see almost 10-15 Pied Kingfishers *Ceryle rudis* actively flying and hovering over the pelican pond of the zoo. It was around 1930 hours with a threatening cloud cover and high humidity. We spent some time checking this behaviour of the kingfishers. The flood beam of the spotlight attracted quite a large number of insects and between bouts of switching on and off of the spotlight, we found the Pied Kingfishers catching insects in the air. Every two to three minutes, each of them would fly up from the perch and swoop down on an insect or two - feeding on them in flight. There were hundreds of dragonflies, but the birds were not after them. Even after switching off the spotlight we found them quite actively flying and feeding. It appears Pied Kingfishers are capable of good night vision. Their cousins the Small Green Bee Eaters *Merops orientalis* are master insect catchers in flight. But they do it during the day. Perhaps this night insect eating by Pied Kingfishers is to avoid competition - or may be they feed on different insects.

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SIGHTING OF BLUE-HEADED ROCK THRUSH *MONTICOLA CYNCLORHINCHUS* IN HYDERABAD

On 17th October 1987, as I was watering the garden at my house in Jubilee Hills, I noticed a strange bird preening itself on a young *Acacia* tree in an unused plot of land next to my house. The distance was about 10 m., the time, 5 p.m. and the bird was directly in the sun, which was behind my back, as I faced it head and throat was blue, with the ear coverts beingA much darker. The area below the throat was rufous as was its rump. The tail was blue and the back as well as the wings were dark brown, mottled with white, a combination that reminded me very much of the colouration of the Redvented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer* in the same area. A white patch was present in the middle of the wing. The bird also had numerous short 'bristles' around the beak. I spent about half an hour watching this bird before it got too dark to see properly. Referring to Dr. Salim Ali's "Pictorial Guide", I identified it as

a male Blueheaded Rock Thrush *Monticola cynclorhinchus*. I saw no female though I had been observing a lone female Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* for some days around my house. It is very easy to confuse the two. I found out from Mr. Siraj Taher that the only record of this bird in Andhra Pradesh was in 1976 in the Eastern Ghats area.

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GLEANINGS

NOTES ON THE YELLOW-THROATED BULBUL *PYCNONOTUS XANTHOLAEMUS*

There is a little known peak of the Eastern Ghats situated in the extreme south of the Cuddapah district of the Madras presidency [now in Andhra Pradesh state], in Lat. 13° 40' 45" N, 78° 28' 30" E, which would appear a sufficiently interesting ground for a naturalist to bring to the notice of the Bombay Natural History Society; and I am happy to be able to do this and, at the same time, afford a little information about a very beautiful and uncommon bird, the Yellow-throated Bulbul *Pycnonotus xantholaemus* which occurs here. The peak is called Horsely konda (Horsely's hill) after a member of the Indian Civil Service who built the present Forest bungalow and laid out its pretty grounds, and generally brought the cool breezy hill top to notice as a local hot-weather resort. The height runs up to 4,000 ft. above sea level. From the presence of a temple on the summit, traces of a rude fort wall and remains of a paved track leading up the hill, as well as one or two tanks for the storage of water, the hill would appear, at one time, to have been of greater local importance than it is at present. It is now all included in reserved forest and as the water supply, though scanty at times, is sufficient and fairly distributed, the hill is a great resort in the hot season for the birds of the surrounding country, and must vie as such with any other on the Eastern Ghats. I visited the little hill-top late in April last and, shortly after my arrival, I became aware of the presence of a bird with which I was unacquainted. I was not altogether surprised at this as I had already seen specimens of the Black Eagle *ctinaetus malayensis*, the Ghat Nightjar *Caprimulgus macrurus*, the Bay-Banded Cuckoo *Penthoceryx sonnerati* [now *Cacomantis sonneratii*, and the Spotted Babbler *PellorneumA ruficeps*. None of these are very common birds although the last mentioned would appear to have a more extensive distribution than Blanford would lead us to suppose. Also, later, on the evening of the 29th May, we heard the English Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*. I call it the *English* Cuckoo because it is so intimately associated with so pleasing a side of English life, but, I myself have heard it between

such wide ranges of latitude, conditions and climate, as the desolate and wind-swept Lang Fjeld in Norway which if not actually within the Arctic circle must be very near it, and the oppressively hot jungles of the Meduck [Medak] and Warangul [Warangal] districts in the Hyderabad Dominions. Its occurrence so far south as Horsely konda must surely be almost a record? We were all much pleased to hear it. It was only at the expense of some little trouble combined with good fortune that I succeeded, on the 29th April, in obtaining a specimen of the yellow- throated Bulbul. The bird is exceedingly shy and restless. No sooner does the eye light on it than it is gone, and its flight takes it sufficiently far away to discourage ideas of following it up. I secured my first specimen from the verandah of the little Mission bungalow in which I was residing. Later, on the 20th May, I secured another specimen, but by then more birds had arrived, evidently to nest, and at the end of May they were not uncommon on the hill. The specimens I obtained, tallied exactly in dimensions and markings with Oates' description. The irides are brown. The bird frequents the upper part of trees and its presence is readily detected by its note to which it is constantly giving utterance. This, which is a very pleasing note, whilstreadily recognized as the note of a Bulbul, is louder and mellower than that of any other Bulbul I am acquainted with. The birds go about in pairs and, once up the hill, seem to take up their quarters in some chosen spot where they are usually to be found; large boulders shaded by trees being especially favoured. On the 15th May, whilst returning from a stroll in the jungle with the Rev. W. Howard Campbell, whose name is, I believe, well known to the Society, I found a nest of this bird. It was placed on the ground amongst dead leaves and between two over-arching granite boulders. We were in thin jungle on a sloping hillside. My companion, who is better up in the nesting of Indian birds than I am, was not a little astonished at seeing a Bulbul's nest on the ground. We retired some distance and watched the bird's return, and I sub-sequently observed the bird on the nest. It was a very ordinary Bulbul's nest containing three eggs much like the eggs of other species of the Bulbul family. They measured 83" by 67". On the 20th May I found another nest containing two eggs. This was placed in a dwarf date palm *Phoenix humilis* a common feature of the vegetation of our hills of this altitude in Southern India on a fairly open hillside. On this occasion also I made sure of the bird by watching its return and observing it in the nest. Horsely konda would seem to be a great nesting resort at this time of year. In the small compound of the house I occupied I found nests of the Common Green Barbet *Thereiceryx zeylonicus* [now *Megalaima zeylanica*, the Coppersmith *Megalaima haemacephala*, the Magpie Robin *Copsychus saularis*, the Common Pied Bush-Chat *Saxicola caprata*, the Large Grey Babbler *Argya malcolmi* now *Turdoides malcolmi* and the Madras Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*. A patient search would, I believe, have rewarded me with nests of the Spotted Babbler and the Small White-throated Babbler *Dumetia albogularis* [now *Dumetia hyperythraalbogularis*]. We did, elsewhere in the hill, find nests of *Dicrurus carulescens* [Whitebellied Drongo], the Large Cuckoo-Shrike *Graucalus macii* [now *Coracina novaehollandiae*] and the Paradise Fly-catcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*

and Mr. Campbell found a nest of *Pellorneum ruficeps* containing 3 eggs. Doubtless the foliage on the hill, combined with the want of it elsewhere, and the comparative seclusion of the forest, are the main attractions. In any case the birds assembled there in considerable numbers and afforded us much interest. I have much pleasure in sending the first nest found together with the eggs and two specimens of the bird to the Society's museum. I have to thank Mr. Campbell for kindly curing the skins of the birds.

P. ROSCOE ALLEN
Bellary, 6th June 1908.
[published in the JOURNAL OF THE BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY Vol. 18 pages 905-907.]

CORRESPONDENCE

1. Nesting of Streaked Fantail Warbler *Cisticola juncidis* .

Messrs. T. Ganesh and P. Kanniah have written about their observations on the nesting of *juncidis* at a grassland near Alwal in 1986 published in MAYURA 7 & 8 : 3-12. While their observations have been described in much detail, I feel some comments are appropriate here. a) Ganesh and Kanniah have mentioned in their title that the grassland was near Alwal. This place-name is totally missing in the subsequent text except for a single mention in the accompanying map which however shows it to be further away from the grassland. The text mentions that the grassland was near Kompally in Ranga Reddy District. Location of study areas is one of the most important mention to be specified in detail in one's paper or note. The problem is further compounded by the later mention in this note of both the names together with one in paranthesis such as "Alwal (Kompally)". The map is however specific that both Alwal and Kompally are different places! b) The data presented in the paper is interesting but, I would like to point out that studying nests for continuous periods of time by other casual observers should not be encouraged. Prolonged periods of stay near nests endangers the incubating birds and fledgelings. The fact that the bird takes the trouble of concealing the nest is in itself a pointer that the species needs all the protection it can achieve by its crypsis. I think my point is validated by the authors' mention (on page 8) under the sub-heading 'Hatching'. They mention that one of them was trying to count the number of nestlings in a nest and three fledgelings left the same. Later when both the parent-birds came and warbled while hovering above the nest, the chicks were seen moving towards the former. In the authors' words, "a happy reunion took place"! In a later article about a BSAP trip to Medak, Mr. O. C. Edwards also makes the same point - "not to disturb the (incubating) bird in any manner, as birds tend to abandon their nests".

2. Birds of Narsapur Reserve Forest, Medak district, Andhra Pradesh.

Mr Sushil Kapadia has written in pleasant text about the BSAP trip to Narsapur in late November 1986. The attached checklist of birds seen during the trip is even more interesting and additional field notes / details would have been satisfying. Places one goes to frequently often have occurrences which appear to be regular happenings. This is not so for birdwatchers elsewhere. Birds that might not require comment for a regular visitor would need some detailed mention for the curiosity of birders in other regions. My interest and curiosity were aroused by the mention of the following raptors seen at Narsapur.

1. Crested Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus cirrhatus*
2. Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus*
3. Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax*
4. Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*
5. Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*

Except for the Crested Serpent Eagle *Spilornis cheela* none of the above raptors are mentioned in the text. Seeing the above five birds apart from the other fourteen raptors listed should make Narsapur an absolute must for birdwatching in Andhra Pradesh. Perhaps a later issue of MAYURA should encourage a birder to write in detail about the raptors of Narsapur.

3. On the occurrence of the Blackeared or Large Indian Kite *Milvus migrans lineatus* in Hyderabad.

Mr. Aasheesh Pittie has in his recordings of first and last sightings of annual (winter) migrants in and around Hyderabad for the seasons of 1983-84, 1984-85 & 1985-86 also listed the Blackeared or Large Indian Kite. The first date of sighting in winter for this sub-species is 14-10-84 at Shamirpet and the last date 08-05-84 at the Nehru Zoological Park in Hyderabad. The dates mentioned above would have us presume that this kite remains in its wintering grounds from October to May. This kite is distinguishable in its overhead flight from the Pariah Kite *Milvus migrans govinda* by larger size and a *conspicuous* white buzzard-like underwing patch (lower wing-coverts) which is only dimly indicated in *govinda*, as mentioned in the Hand-book. Ali & Ripley (in the Handbook) mention that the sub-species is a winter visitor in small numbers to W. Pakistan and northern and peninsular India south at least to about Lat. 18 degrees North in the Deccan (i.e. Maharashtra & Andhra). Pittie's dates for *lineatus* are very interesting because of the considerable span of time it stays in its southern-most edge of the winter distribution range. This would mean that *lineatus* may also occur regularly, if not occassionally, in areas south of Hyderabad, possibly upto the Bangalore-Anantapur- Chittoor-Tirupati belt.

4. Birds of Nagarjunasagar-Srisailam Tiger Reserve.

The short note by Mr. P. Balkoteshwar Rao about the birds of the Tiger Reserve was a delightful introduction to the area. There is however one important point missing in the note about the birding in the area. Mananur, where Messrs. RAo and Sarath visited is also a previous survey spot by the late Dr. Salim Ali during his Hyderabad State Ornithological Survey. A brief comparison with his notes would havemade this note more interesting. Surprisingly, they have not seen the Greyheaded *Sturnus malabaricus* and Jungle *Acridotheres fuscus* Mynas in the Srisailam forests. Both the Brahminy *Sturnus pagodarum* and the Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* would be very common, if not regular, in the vicinity of human inhabitation and adjoining open forests. Mr. Rao has mentioned of a sight record of the Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus* during this visit. The editors of MAYURA have also added a note mentioning that the "known distribution for the Red Junglefowl is roughly above the Godavari river in Northern Andhra Pradesh." The Indian Red Junglefowl is known to be resident from the outer Himalayas southward through 'ecologically suitable parts of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Assam and Bangladesh. Ali & Ripley mention in the Handbook that the exact boundaries (are) imperfectly known, but on the eastern side stretches south at least to the latitude of Rajahmundry (c. 17 degrees north) on both banks of Godavari river (NE Andhra). Crosses between the two species frequently occur in their narrow zone of contact. The fact that there has been never any mention of the Red Junglefowl being recorded this far south of the Godavari leads us to the assumption that the bird seen by Rao may have been an earlier release, probably even a second or third generation individual. The previous release may possibly also be hybridizing with the wild Grey Junglefowl *Gallus sonneratii* in the Mananur forests. This needs further investigation.

Received for publication: 19-07-1990.

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FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

As in 1987, this year also the activities of the Society started on an interesting note. Several members, in groups of twos and threes visited 19 waterbodies during January and February to conduct surveys and take counts of the waterfowl for the Asian Midwinter Waterfowl Count 1988. A total count of 58,030 birds of 81 species was made, which is nearly 3 times that of 1987 (20,239 birds of 73 species) although the number of sites in 1988 against 10 in 1987). Besides the actual counts, very roughly estimated flocks of about 10,000 + ducks and 16,000-18,000 waders were observed at Pulicat Bird Sanctuary (Nellore District). Another imporovement this year was the coverage of some nearby districts and 2 or 3 other areas in Nellore district. After collection of data from all participants, a full data sheet and a consolidated report was sent to the National Co-ordinator at B.N.H.S., Bombay.

Programmes of the Society during the year 1988 were:-
-INDOOR-18/01 "Mangroves of the East Coast of A.P." A.V.P., By Mr. B.C. Choudhury. 22/02 "Status of the Great Indian Bustard and measures for its conservation." A.V.P. By Dr. Asad Rahmani, B.N.H.S. 14/03 "Conservation Action Group - its need and scope in A.P." Discussion with Mr. Bharat Bhushan, Conservation Officer, B.N.H.S. 11/04 "A visit to Pulicat and Nelapattu Bird Sanctuaries." Talk by Mr. Siraj Taher. 25/04 "A short stay at Narsapur Forest." A.V.P. by Mr. Suhel Quader. 09/05 "Visit to Periyar and Mudumalai Sanctuaries." Talk by Mr. M.S. Kulkarni. 23/05 "Motor-cycling through Wildlife Sanctuaries of N.W. India. A.V.P. by Mr. P. Balu and Mr.C.R. Sarath. 13/06 "Flora and Fauna of Mahavir Harin Vanasthali." A.V.P. by Mr. Aasheesh Pittie. 11/07 "Some sanctuaries of Madhya Pradesh." A.V.P. by Mr. B.C. Choudhury. And, Discussions on roosting site survey of Hyderabad district. 22/08 Annual General Meeting. 26/09 Film show. 17/10 "Birdwatching." Talk by Mr. Sushil Kapadia. 31/10 Film show. 28/11 "Impressions of a new birder." Talk by Mr. K. Bharadwaj. 12/12 Discussion on working strategies for Asian Waterfowl Census - 1989 and film show, "Birds of Nelapattu."

The field trips provided a good opportunity for the members to visit various types of habitats and assess for themselves the pressures there, if any, and also their importance - as birding areas. As is usual, ICRISAT campus, Manjira Reservoir and Narsapur Forest were the favourite of the members so there was good attendance. Three new areas were visited, Regional Research Laboratory Campus, Sahebnagar Forest Nursery and Amangal Lake. It will be intersting to keep visiting these places in future to monitor them as to their suitability as bird havens. The indoor meetings this year were very productive with good member participation. One or two guest speakers added variety and some of the discussions could lead to useful

activity for the members. There is no room for complacency and it is important that suitable projects are planned for the future and useful programmes devised. Member participation is important and so also an increase in membership to the Society itself.

The Annual General Meeting was held on 22nd August 1988 at the office of the Chief Conservator of Forests, Hyderabad. Mr. M.S. Kulkarni, Hon. Treasurer, presented the accounts for 1986 and 1987. The new committee was elected which is as follows.

PRESIDENT:	Mr. Pushp Kumar. I.F.S.
VICE-PRESIDENTS:	Mr. A.A. Aziz & Mrs. G.S. Plumber.
EX-OFFICIO:	Chief Wildlife Warden Govt. of A.P.
HON. SECRETARY:	Mr. Siraj A. Taher.
JT. HON. SEC.:	Mr. Sushil Kapadia.
HON. TREASURER:	Mr. M.S. Kulkarni.
EXEC. COMMITTEE:	Mr. Aasheesh Pittie,Mr C.R. Sarath Mr. Tim Galbraith, Mr. K.N. Sudhir Rao, Mr. P. Kanniah.

Mr. Tim Galbraith, who has a printing press, offered 1,000 information/ publicity brochures and cards free of cost.

Mr. Bharat Bhushan suggested the formation of an Advisory Committee, which was accepted.

Articles, notes, observations, etc., were not being received by the Society and as such publication of MAYURA is delayed for long periods. The editors are nevertheless doing a fine job, keeping members informed through PITTA - which, besides regular news, also has a sheet with sketches of birds. This will help members to identify birds in the field and also to differentiate between closely resembling species.

The Society records with regret the passing away of Lt. Col. Dr. Fatehsinghrao P. Gaekwad of Baroda, President of W.W.F.-India, on 1st September 1988. A stalwart in the field of wildlife conservation, he held many important national and international posts.

Several reports, brochures and magazines on birds and wildlife are available with the Hon. Secretary. These have either been donated by members or have been received from B.N.H.S., Oriental Bird Club, Zoo Outreach Organisation, etc. Such of the members desirous of borrowing these may get in touch with the Secretary. These books are on loan for 15 days.

The A.P. Forest Dept., its officers and staff, have been, as before, extremely co-operative and helpful in organising all the outings and indoor meetings of the Society. This has been the main reason for the success of all programmes conducted by us. Besides their participation, the officers and staff of the wildlife wing of the Dept., have extended their help in a most amiable manner. All our thanks to them.

BIRDWATCHER'S SOCIETY OF ANDHRA PRADESH
(Regd No. 1158 of 1983)

ECUTIVE COMMITTEE (1994 1995)

- Pushp Kumar (President)
- s. Gool S. Plumber (Vice- President)
- N.G. Reddy (Vice - President)
- Rajeev Mathew (Honorary Secretary)
- Tim Galbraith (Honorary Treasurer)
- Aasheesh Pittie (Editor)
- M.S. Kulkarni
- M.K. Kashinath
- s. Geeta Raghavan
- K. Bharadwaj

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e Society was founded in 1980 with the object of spreading the message of bird nservation. Membership of the Society is open to persons of either sex and of any tionality, scientific societies, institutions, clubs and companies. Corporate mem-rship is available for persons in their official capacity.

RVICES TO MEMBERS

rtnightly birdwatching field trips * Lectures, discussions, talks * Fortnightly film and de shows * Annual nature camps and treks * Participation in national projects like winter Asian Waterfowl Census * Bird-ringing for migration studies * Nature otography opportunities * Visits to bird sanctuaries and parks * Field tick-list for derabad and surrounds * Membership of Society for Nature Conservation at ncessional rates * Society badge * Access to periodicals, journals and reports on d studies and conservation * PITTA the society's monthly bulletin * MAYURA the nnual newsletter!

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rance Fees	Rs. 10-00
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